COLORADO SPRINGS

GAZETTE TELEGRAPH

JANUARY 16, 1997 50¢ DAILY/$1 SUNDAY

Passionate D-11 meeting draws 600

Board session on student publications prompted by gay teens story becomes forum on society

By **Wendy Y. Lawton**
Gazette Telegraph

In her 50 years, Kathy Mayer had never held a protest sign. Yet Wednesday night, the homemaker found herself bundled against the cold on a street corner near Wasson High School. She carried a hand-lettered sign.

What motivated Mayer was simple: fear. Fear that the religious right is pushing its values onto kids in the city's largest school district through a policy promoting abstinence and traditional marriage.

Up the street stood Ron James. He held a big blue banner supporting that policy.

The 69-year-old retired teacher was also afraid. A member of Colorado for Family Values, James said American society is deteriorating. Teen pregnancy is rising. A strong work ethic is on the way out. Kids need a sexual-conduct policy for guidance.

Neither Mayer nor James spoke in-

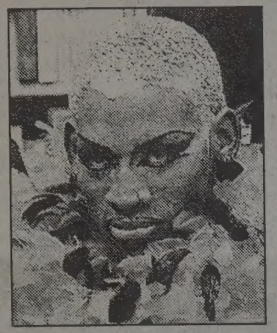
See **D-11**/A3

Mary Kelley/Gazette Telegraph

Mary Margaret Nussbaum, who wrote the story in the Palmer High School newspaper on gay teens, speaks Wednesday night before the District 11 school board on its publications policy.

PEOPLE

Rodman makes list of poorly attired



Rodman

Freeze! It's the fashion police!

Mr. Blackwell, the self-appointed top cop, goes after the usual suspects in his 37th annual list of the 10 worst-dressed women, but singles out the inimitable (and who'd want to, really?) Dennis Rodman for the top dishonors.

"In fishnet and feathers, he's a unisex wreck," Blackwell said Tuesday of the cross-dressing basketball bad boy.

Actress Glenn Close took the No. 2 spot, trailed by Lisa Kudrow, Helen Hunt and Goldie Hawn.

But the catty critic sheathed his claws long enough to give style points to Gwyneth Paltrow, Lauren Bacall, Madonna, Fran Drescher, Whitney Houston, Chelsea Clinton, Bette Midler, Winona Ryder, Sharon Lawrence and Christine Baranski.

Fergie no longer 'Duchess of Pork'

A slimmer Sarah Ferguson, making light of her former media title as the "Duchess of Pork," stepped forward in New York on Wednesday as the new spokeswoman for Weight Watchers in this country.

Weight Watchers spokeswoman Mary Anne Bohrer said the duchess of York stops short of revealing her actual weight.

She's in the 131- to 158-pound range Weight Watchers suggests for her height of 5 feet 7½ inches.

Fergie reportedly will make $1 million a year as the organization's spokeswoman.

House member cuts hair after win

There is a little bit less of Rep. Neil Abercrombie, D-Hawaii, as he heads back to Washington — his signature ponytail is gone.

Fergie

The liberal Democrat once stood out among his House colleagues because of his long locks. But he said campaign ads by his opponent last year prompted the change for his fourth term.

Orson Swindle, a retired Marine pilot and prisoner of war in Vietnam, ran an ad that included Abercrombie tossing his long hair.

Boss was hot, now he's polar

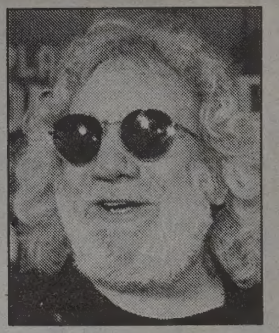
Bruce Springsteen, known for such rock anthems as "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out," now has a chilly award for his efforts.

Springsteen was awarded the Polar Music Prize on Wednesday and will receive $151,000 from a fund administered by the Royal Swedish Academy of Music.

Garcia's ex-wife plenty grateful

A $5 million agreement between Grateful Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia and his former wife, Carolyn Adams "Mountain Girl" Garcia, must be honored by the dead rock star's estate, a Marin County, Calif., judge ruled Wednesday.

Judge Michael Dufficy said a 13-line agreement signed by Jerry Garcia in 1993, in which he promised to pay Carolyn Garcia $20,883 monthly for 20 years, was valid and enforceable.



Garcia

"Jerry honored the agreement while he was alive," Dufficy wrote. "Jerry's estate cannot rescind the contract after Jerry is gone."

The ruling follows a closely watched 14-day trial over an attempt by Garcia's widow, Deborah Koons Garcia, to invalidate the agreement.

French rocker denies 'rude' quip

Johnny Hallyday, an American? Excusez moi?

France's beloved 53-year-old, motorcycle-riding rock star has denied a report that he wants to become an American citizen because the French are "rude."

"I never said it," he told the daily France-Soir in Paris. "I don't at all have the intention of becoming American. If the French are rude, so am I."

News services

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Thursday, Jan. 16, the 16th day of 1997. There are 349 days left in the year.

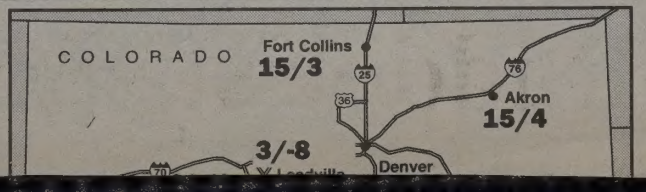
■ **TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY**

On Jan. 16, 1920, Prohibition began as the 18th Amendment to the U.S.

ACCU WEATHER FORECAST THURSDAY, JAN. 16, 1997

CENTRAL MOUNTAINS: Partly to mostly sunny today; a brief snow shower. Highs 1-34. Cold tonight. Lows 14 below to 6 above.

FRONT RANGE: Brisk and very cold today with sun and patchy clouds. Highs



Mike Madson's DAILY WEATHER EYE

As I suggested you prepare yourself for, a quick blast of Arctic air moved in last night and will be

D-11/Meeting opens gates

From A1

side the auditorium. There, 629 people attended a Colorado Springs School District 11 school board meeting where the sexual-conduct proposal and a separate policy on student publications were the subject of more than two hours of solemn and passionate debate.

But their feelings — and their fears — were echoed by the students, clergy, activists and parents who did speak.

It was as if the source of the proposals — two articles on homosexuality published in the Palmer High School newspaper — had opened the floodgates for modern concerns.

Concerns that traditions of free speech and equality and tolerance are under attack. And concerns that traditions such as family and marriage and moral values are under fire.

Under the glare of television lights, people seemed to agree something is terribly wrong.

School board President Kent Olvey also heard people agree on few other points.

"I didn't hear anyone who ants censorship," Olvey said. nd I didn't hear anyone who didn't think abstinence was the policy for our kids."

So why, if most people agree on basic ideas, have there been so much public debate, politicking and proposals for new rules since the newspaper articles were printed almost three months ago?

"People can't decide what the true issue is because those stories touched so many buttons," Olvey said.

The buttons were pressed again at Wednesday night's meeting, where prepared remarks, general civility — and a lot of security guards — held sway.

For Mary Margaret Nussbaum, who wrote the front-page story on gay teen-agers, and Lori Schroeder, who wrote the editorial supporting same-sex marriage, the issue was students' right to freedom of speech — and their ability to tackle controversial issues.

"There is a lively and engaging debate going on here tonight," Nussbaum said. "So it should be with the student press."

Both supported the proposed policy on student publications, which still keeps editorial decisions in the hands of student journalists. The proposal includes a few additions, such as a disclaimer to bring it into line with state law.

But others opposed the policy.

Parent Heidi O'Brien said the articles disgusted her. Homosexuality, she said, has no place in school papers — and school policy should reflect that.

"It's not an issue of freedom of speech," O'Brien said. "It's about the best way to guide our children to be the best leaders for tomorrow."

Others took up the topic of a sexual-conduct policy being promoted by Colorado for Family Values. The proposal is a one-sentence statement calling on the school board to pass a policy promoting abstinence, affirming traditional marriage and discouraging promiscuity.

The Rev. M.E. Proby of St. John's Baptist Church stood up and supported the proposal. He and other local clergy have passed out postcards calling on the board to pass the policy — suggesting members of their congregations mail the cards to the school board. So far, 1,400 cards have been received.

Proby compared Colorado Springs to the biblical Babylon.

"I had to come here tonight because I looked back at the Old Testament because a community was about to be destroyed," he said. "Because no one stood up. Because people kept quiet while a city was destroyed. Speak now or forever hold your peace."

But Jody Alyn, who is on the Citizens Project board of directors, said the policy isn't needed because District 11's health curriculum teaches abstinence. The policy, Alyn said, would simply promote censorship.

"This policy is not about teaching morality or values," Alyn said. "It's about condemnation of difference and restriction of individual rights. The CFV proposal is yet another thinly veiled, cloaked attempt at sweeping censorship."

The sexual-conduct proposal isn't even on the school board's agenda for formal discussion, but it could vote on the publications policy as early as Jan. 29.

And the debate is sure to continue. CFV plans to deliver at least 5,000 more postcards to the school board.

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